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COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE
TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS

Sub-Committee of Experts on the
Transport of Dangerous Goods
(Fourteenth session,
Geneva, 8-18 December 1997,
agenda item 2 (d))

DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO THE MODEL REGULATIONS ON THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS

Other draft amendments

Formation of a new Division 4.4 for Desensitized explosives

Transmitted by the Observer from New Zealand

Introduction

In the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Sub-Committee meetings various decisions were taken on the classification of desensitised explosives. Traditionally desensitised explosives have been included in Division 4.1 which is named Flammable Solids. During the Twelfth session of the Sub-Committee consideration was given to the classification of a liquid desensitised explosive. At that time there was a strong division of opinion. One faction considered that this substance should be included in Division 4.1 to keep all desensitised explosives under the same heading in the Recommendation. The opposing fraction believed the substance should be classified on the basis of it inherent properties. As it was a liquid and was flammable it was eventually classified as a Class 3 Flammable Liquid.

The desensitisation of explosives is often achieved by diluting them with a suitable phlegmatiser. If this is volatile then the desensitised explosive may again exhibit explosive properties. While this potential to revert to explosives is clearly identified in the Recoomedations for substances which are classified under Division 4.1 (c), this is not the case for desensitised liquid explosive classified in Class 3.

The desensitised explosive nature of these substances is not readily apparent form the Class (Division) label or from the transport documentation.

New Zealand's Position re the Globally Harmonized Classification System

New Zealand strongly supports the creation of a Globally Harmonized Chemical Classification System. We also strongly support the Terms of Reference of the CG/HCCS. Our position is stated in ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1997/68. This position is the same as the position presented in INF.3 at the thirteenth session on the Sub-Committee.

Proposal

Create a new division in Class 4 being Division 4.4 Desensitised Explosives. The description of this Division would be "substances which are desensitised liquid or solid explosives". This would require a new label. A possible label would be a red upper half with red and orange horizontal stripes in the lower half. Alternatively the lower half could be orange and white horizontal stripes.

Justification

Currently solid desensitised explosives are included in Division 4.1 (c). While the Recommendations clearly identify this group of substances, their latent explosive nature is not apparent from the Class (Division) label or transport documentation. Also, Division 4.1 does not uniquely identify the desensitised explosive nature of the flammable solids as this Division also includes Flammable Solids and Self-Reactive and Related Substances.

The inclusion of all desensitised explosives in the one Division will clearly identify the risk that they may revert to their explosive properties if the phlegmatiser or diluent is lost or evaporates. Placing these substances in a new Division will clearly identify the dual hazards of these substances. That is they are flammable solids or liquids but have the potential to revert to explosives.

Recommendation

That the Committee creates a new division 4.4 for desensitised explosives and adopts an new label to identify this division.